(b) The Department of Secondary and Higher Education has launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT) @ Schools' during the 10th Plan period. Under the ICT @ Schools scheme, financial assistance is provided to the States/UTs for imparting computer education and computer aided education in Government and Government-aided Secondary and Senior Secondary schools on the basis of CEPs submitted by them. Besides, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS)/Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) each would convert one school into SMART schools in each State/UT, KVS/NVS would also impart computer education and computer aided education to not more than 10 neighbouring schools within a radius of 3 to 4 kilometer. Further, DOEACC Society is engaged in computer education by availing the facilities available in computer training institution in the non-formal sector to generate qualified manpower. Also, Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) another society of Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, has various Post Graduate programmes and Diploma courses being conducted in different centres of C-DAC.

Provisioning of rural telephones by Private Telecom Operator

331. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the present number of rural telephone connections in the country, State-wise;

(b) whether it is a fact that despite major advancement in telecommunication technology penetration is very low in rural areas;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether it would be made mandatory on part of the private telecom operators to set up rural telephones in their respective circles, instead of asking to park a part of their revenues in the form ADC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) The number of rural telephone connections in the country as on 31-12-2004 was 1,30,37,333. The Telecom circle-wise details are given in the enclosed statement. (*See* below)

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The telecom operators are not keen to provide telecom services in rural areas due to the common perception that these are unremunerative. All the Basic Private Service Operators (BPSOs) who had roll out obligation for providing Village Public Telephones (VPTs) on the basis of old licenses, have migrated to Unified Access Service License (UASL) in November, 2003. According to the guidelines of UASL, there is no requirement of mandatory coverage of rural areas by the licensees. The requirement of access in rural areas would now be met from the Universal Service Obligation (USO) Fund. However, rural tele-density has improved from 0.41% to 1.20% during the Ninth Plan period. The present rural tele-density is 1.68%.

(d) There is no such proposal at present.

Statement

Telecom circle-wise number of rural telephone connections in the country as on 31-12-2004

Sl. No.	Telecom Circle	Telephone Connections (Rural) as on 31-12-2004
1	Andaman & Nicobar	22,056
2	Andhra Pradesh	13,63,946
3	Assam	1,45,669
4	Bihar	4,09,660
5	Chhattisgarh	89,130
6	Gujarat	8,78,645
7	Haryana	4,15,697
8	Himachal Pradesh	3,80,427
9	Jammu & Kashmir	58,158
10	Jharkhand	1,04,193
11	Karnataka	8,80,648
12	Kerala	23,16,850
13	Madhya Pradesh	3,02,638
14	Maharashtra	14,16,154

Sl. No.	Telecom Circle	Telephone Connections (Rural) as on 31-12-2004
15	North East-I	59,202
16	North East-II	52,164
17	Orissa	3,26,212
18	Punjab	8,75,340
19	Rajasthan	6,58,503
20	Tamil Nadu	8,89,671
21	Uttaranchal	1,04,961
22	Uttar Pradesh (E)	4,92,105
23	Uttar Pradesh (W)	1,91,841
24	West Bengal	6,03,463
	TOTAL	1,30,37,333

Connectivity Speed of Data One and Triband

332. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that BSNLand MTNL have launched its broadband services in the country;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that both the companies have launched above services only in selected cities of the country;

(c) if so, the details of cities in which broadband services have been launched; and

(d) the connectivity speed of Dataone and Triband and how they are faster than the existing VSNL's internet services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEELAHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has launched its Broadband service under the brand name Data One and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) under the brand name Triband on 14th January, 2005.

(b) Presently, BSNL has launched services in 13 cities and MTNL in